

Scarlet Firethorn, *Pyracantha* (*Pyracantha coccinea*)

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Summary:

Foliage: Evergreen broadleaf Height: 15 +feet Spread: 15 feet
Shape: Spreading – can get wild (sprawling) if not pruned
Pyracantha is a large, fast-growing shrub has showy white blooms in spring and a spectacular display of orange/red fruit in the fall. This plant requires pruning since unpruned plants are very rangy looking. Stems have very sharp thorns, thus pruning this plant must be performed with caution. Plants should be not situated where children or pedestrians may encounter stems.

Plant Needs:

Zone: 6b to 9 Light: Partial shade to full sun
Moisture: Wet, moist, or dry Soil Type: Sandy, loam, or clay pH Range: 3.7 to 7.0

Functions:

Suggested uses for this plant include border, hedge, foundation, accent plant, espalier, & barrier.

Planting Notes:

Plant in an area that will accommodate the large size of this species (unless pruned yearly)

Care:

Pruning can be done anytime and is needed to train this plant in desired manner.
Provide strong support (or anchors) when grown on a wall.

Problems:

Planting in fertile soil will produce rampant growth, which makes plant susceptible to fireblight and low berry production.
Scab turns fruit a dark color.
Lacebug and red spider mite can be problems.

Alternatives:

Consult local sources, including historic or public gardens and arboreta, regarding cultivars and related species that grow well in your area.

Cultivars of *Pyracantha coccinea*:

`Rutgers' is a hardy, low-growing hybrid with orange-red fruit, and good disease resistance (3 feet high by 9 feet wide).

`Fiery Cascade' has small red fruit and is a disease resistant and hardy (8 feet high by 9 feet wide) hybrid.

There are many cultivars of this species. One should select cultivars based on disease resistance, fruit color, and hardiness.

Related species:

Pyracantha angustifolia Yukon Belle™ is a very hardy cultivar (zone 5) with orange fruit.

Comments:

Pyracantha can be grown as an espalier against a wall or trellis, but such training is labor intensive. The primary showy characteristic of this species is its no less than spectacular fruit display for many weeks in the fall. Pruning is difficult due to the many sharp thorns.

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